



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

## HOW TO OBTAIN A PERMIT TO INSTALL/REMOVE A Swimming Pool/Spa

CITY OF SAN DIEGO DEVELOPMENT SERVICES  
1222 FIRST AVENUE, MS 301, SAN DIEGO, CA 92101-4153  
Call (619) 446-5300 for appointments and (619) 446-5000 for information.

INFORMATION  
BULLETIN

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This Information Bulletin describes the procedures for obtaining a permit to install a swimming pool and/or spa that has been pre-approved to master plan specifications, or approved by a licensed testing agency. This bulletin also describes procedures for obtaining a permit for a prefabricated spa.

### I. WHEN IS PERMIT REQUIRED?

A Combination Permit is required for any swimming pool or spa accessory to a one or two residential dwelling units unless all the following criteria are met:

- A. Pool or spa is prefabricated; and
- B. Walls are entirely above grade; and
- C. Capacity is less than 5,000 gallons.

If the pool or spa meets the above exemption criteria, a separate electrical or plumbing permit is still required for new plumbing or wiring.

Separate building, electrical and plumbing permits are required for pools or spas accessory to all uses other than one or two residential dwelling units.

Permits are not required for fences unless they are more than six feet high. A pool or spa exempt from permit requirements is *not* exempt from fence requirements, see Building Newsletter 84-1, "Swimming Pool Requirements."

### II. OPTIONS FOR SERVICE

For more efficient service, appointments are available for plans simple enough to be reviewed "over-the-counter." To qualify for over-the-counter plan review, a pool/spa must either be constructed to pre-approved master plan specifications, or have been tested and approved by a licensed testing agency such as the International Conference of Building Officials (ICBO). A prefabricated spa does not need a master plan or testing agency approval.

Appointments may be scheduled at the Development Services Center, 1222 First Avenue, or by phone at (619) 446-5300.

Proposed master plans for pools and spas are submitted by the designer and are approved for construction after the design has been checked to the California Building Code. The applicant for a permit then obtains permission from the designer to use the master plan.

Without a master plan or testing agency approval a pool or pool/spa combination cannot be checked over-the-counter.

### Documents referenced in this Information Bulletin

- DS-3032, Permit Application
- DS-3143, Mandatory Measures Checklist: Residential
- Building Newsletter 84-1, Swimming Pool Requirements
- Information Bulletin 122, How to Prepare a Single Dwelling Unit Plot Plan and Vicinity Map
- Information Bulletin 103, Fee Schedule and Worksheet for Mechanical, Plumbing/Gas, Electrical
- Information Bulletin 501, Fee Schedule, Construction Permits - Structures
- Information Bulletin 117, Regulations Covering Permit Expiration and Extension

### III. FORMS TO COMPLETE - DRAWINGS TO SUPPLY

For "over-the-counter" plan review the following items must be supplied:

#### A. Plot Plan

Three copies of a plot plan are required. Refer to Information Bulletin 122, "How to Prepare a Single Dwelling Unit Plot Plan and Vicinity Map," for instructions. Along with the items listed on the typical plot plan, plans for swimming pools and spas must clearly indicate:

1. Maximum exterior dimensions of the swimming pool.
2. Distance from the edge of the swimming pool to all adjacent structures, embankments and property lines.
3. Location of all swimming pool and spa service equipment including distance to property lines.
4. Location and depth of the deep and shallow ends of the pool.
5. Location, extent, and height of all fences and location of self-closing, self-latching gates.

Refer to Building Newsletter 84-1, "Swimming Pool Requirements," for information on required yards, fences and gates. Be aware that there are also zoning requirements for yard setbacks. Information on zoning for a particular site may be obtained from the Development Services Center, (619) 446-5000.

**B. Approved Master or Testing Agency Plans**

Provide two copies of an approved master plan or valid testing agency plan. Approved master plans must bear an original signature of the designer owning the plans, or must be accompanied by an original letter of permission to use the plans. Testing agency plans must bear a testing agency number authorized for use under the current California Building Code.

Plans for public pools must be approved by County Environmental Health Services prior to obtaining a building permit. Contact the Regional Permit Center at 1-800 468-1786 for information on requirements.

**C. Title 24 Energy Documentation**

If a pool or spa is heated, it must comply with Title 24 State Energy Efficiency Standards. Two copies of a completed Mandatory Measures Checklist (DS-3143) are required.

**D. Permit Application**

A fully completed Permit Application (DS-3032) is necessary for permit issuance. Refer to the back of the permit application for instructions on completing the application. *Important:* there are *no* exceptions to the workers' compensation insurance instructions.

**E. Fee Schedule and Worksheet**

When separate electrical and plumbing permits are required, complete the worksheet on Information Bulletin 103, "Fee Schedule and Worksheet for Mechanical, Plumbing/Gas, Electrical."

**IV. THE PLAN REVIEW PROCESS**

City staff will make every effort to approve the plans during the first plan review. Public pools will be referred to Structural Building Development Review for disabled access approval. Call (619) 446-5400 for disabled access requirement information.

**V. FEES**

Plan check and application fees are paid at initial plan check. Permit fees are paid at permit issuance. For the amount due refer to Bulletins 501, "Fee Schedule, Construction Permits - Structures".

**VI. WHEN THE PERMIT IS ISSUED**

The invoice you receive at permit issuance is your copy of the permit. You will receive one set of your plans with all approval stamps on it. This set of plans must be available at each inspection. You will receive an Inspection Record Card and a Circuit Card for the inspector's signature as construction is approved.

Typically the inspections for pools and spas are:

- A. Steel placement, pool bonding and underground for plumbing and gas;
- B. Pre-plaster and fences;
- C. Final inspection.

Building and Combination permits are active for 180 days and renew for an additional 180 days each

time an inspection is approved. Information regarding permit expiration and extension can be found in Information Bulletin 117, "Regulations Covering Permit Expiration and Extension."

**VII. SWIMMING POOL REMOVAL**

The removal of an existing swimming pool requires a plumbing permit and an electrical permit to insure that all electrical, gas and plumbing connections are properly terminated. These permits can be obtained "over-the-counter" from the Development Services Department, 1222 First Ave (3rd Floor).

Inspections by city staff are required for all swimming pool removals. Call for inspections prior to backfilling any pool excavation.

When the pool excavation is to be filled-in, there are two alternatives.

1. If preparing the site to support possible future construction, all existing concrete, reinforcing steel, plumbing, debris, etc. should be removed prior to backfilling. Any fill placed into the excavation should be tested and approved by a civil engineer. The civil engineer should be contacted prior to backfilling the pool excavation and provide a compaction control report to document the engineered fill.

2. If no future construction at the pool site is anticipated, per the owner's discretion, the pool and all associated debris may be buried within the pool excavation. After all utility connections have been properly disconnected and approved by the city inspector, the concrete and other debris from the existing pool may be left in the ground and the site backfilled. It is recommended that, as a minimum, all concrete and pool related debris within 2 ft. of the surface be removed and several holes placed in the bottom of the pool to allow for drainage. A plot plan should be prepared that accurately identifies the location and manner of debris left in the ground.

If the backfill placed into the pool excavation is not compacted, tested and approved by a civil engineer, or the debris is buried in the excavation, the site may not be suitable for new construction. Future use of the site and disclosure requirements should be carefully considered prior to choosing this option. New construction on the site may be hampered by the debris, and soil settlement could result within the backfill area.

If the property owner does not select alternative 1 (to properly backfill and compact the excavation), an "Uncontrolled Embankment Agreement" must be executed between the City and the owner whenever the excavation is greater than five (5) feet in depth. A site plan showing the location of the old swimming pool and backfill, a copy of the agreement (available at 1222 First Avenue, 5th Floor) must be submitted for review and approval by the City Engineer. The final executed agreement shall then be recorded with the San Diego County Recorder's office (1600 Pacific Highway).